DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 268 869 HE 019 234

AUTHOR Attinasi, Louis C., Jr.
TITLE Getting in: Mexican American Students' Perceptions of Their College-Going Behavior with Implications for Their Freshman Year Persistence in the University. ASHE 1986 Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE Feb 86
NOTE 46p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (San Antonio, TX, February 20-23, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence; Cognitive Mapping; College Attendance; College Environment; *College Students; Expectation; Higher Education; *Mexican Americans; Minority Groups; Social Integration; Socialization; *Social Theories; *Student Attitudes; *Student Attrition
IDENTIFIERS *ASHE Annual Meeting; Ethnomethodology; Symbolic Interactionism

ABSTRACT

Mexican American college students' views about the context influencing their decision to persist or leave the university were studied. Two sociologies of everyday life, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, guided the inquiry. Perceptions of college-going behavior before and during the freshman year were obtained from 18 students and former students. Interviews were conducted 8 to 11 months following the freshman year. Students thought over their lives and recounted experiences related to their own and others' college-going behavior. For each experience, students described ways that others were involved in the experience, as well as their own perceptions. One type of college-going behavior of the Mexican American students was distinguished as pre-matriculation or "getting ready" and included: initial expectation engendering, fraternal modeling, mentor modeling, indirect simulation, and direct simulation. A second type of college-going behavior, post-matriculation or "getting in" behaviors/attitudes, encompassed perceptions of the college: mass, distance, and complexity of the physical surroundings and social and academic environment. Conclusions are offered concerning the effects on persistence of background variables, anticipatory socialization, social integration, and cognitive maps. Four pages of references conclude the report. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED268869

GETTING IN: MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR COLLEGE-GOING BEHAVIOR WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR FRESHMAN YEAR PERSISTENCE IN THE UNIVERSITY

Louis C. Attinasi, Jr., Northeastern Illinois University

Paper Presented at:
Association for the Study of Higher Education
Annual Meeting
San Antonio, Texas
February 22, 1986*

HE 019 234

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Louis C. Attinasi, Jr.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ASHE Association for the Study of Higher Education
The George Washington University/One Dupont Circle, Suite 630/Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 296-2597

This paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas, February 20-23, 1986. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

GETTING IN: MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR COLLEGE-GOING BEHAVIOR WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR FRESHMAN YEAR PERSISTENCE IN THE UNIVERSITY

Louis C. Attinasi, Jr., Northeastern Illinois University

Paper Presented at:
Association for the Study of Higher Education
Annual Meeting
San Antonio, Texas
February 22, 1986*

In view of its importance for social advancement (Carter & Segura, 1979; Crossland, 1971) and its contribution to the improvement of personal well-being (A. Astin, 1982; Withey, 1971), it is not surprising that higher education in the United States has become a cynosure for efforts to improve the condition of economically and socially disadvantaged subpopulations. Ironically, the present condition of these subpopulations is due in no small measure to the fact that in the past higher education's service as an instrument for social mobility was seldom indiscriminate. America's racial and ethnic minorities have been and continue to be "grossly underrepresented in higher education and in almost all occupational fields that require a college education" (A. Astin, 1982, p. 1), and do not, as a consequence, enjoy equitable participation in the larger society's social, economic, and political life.

One racial minority that has been particularly underserved by American higher education, in general, and by the four-year

---

*Not to be cited or copied without author's permission.

---

institution, in particular, is the Mexican American. In 1979, according to an estimate by the Bureau of the Census (1980), the rate of baccalaureate degree attainment in the general population was more than four times the rate in the Mexican American subpopulation alone. Data presented by Brown (1980) tend to confirm the link between social and economic advancement and college graduation. Relative to the total population, Mexican Americans are overrepresented in lower-level, poorer-paying occupations such as service workers, craftsmen, operatives, farm laborers, and non-farm laborers. On the other hand, they are underrepresented in more prestigious, better-paying occupations including professional and technical workers, managers and administrators, and farmers and farm managers.

The relatively low percentage of the Mexican American subpopulation graduating from college is attributable, in part, to high attrition rates at the elementary and secondary school levels which effectively decrease the number of individuals eligible for college attendance, and to the failure of a substantial number of high school graduates from the subpopulation to enroll in college. Data based on the Bureau of the Census' Current Population Surveys from 1974 through 1978 (A. Astin, 1982) indicate nationwide a rate of high school completion for Mexican Americans of 51 percent and a rate of college entry of 23 percent. The corresponding rates for Whites are 83 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

The Persistence of Mexican Americans in College

The low percentage of college graduates among Mexican Americans is also due to the failure of many Chicanos, once enrolled in an institution of higher education, to persist to degree completion. Numerous studies involving national (H. Astin & Cross, 1979), regional (Carter & Segura, 1979), state (de los Santos, Montemayor, & Solis, 1980) and institutional (Kissler, 1980; Richardson & Attinasi, 1982; Rosenthal, 1980) data have shown that Mexican American students graduate from college within a normal time frame--four to five years--at a rate that is from one and a half to two times smaller than the rate for Anglo students. Even if a longer time frame--nine or ten years--is considered, the discrepancy persists. Tracking until 1980 students who entered college in 1971, A. Astin (1982) found that 55 percent of the Anglos but only 40 percent of the Mexican Americans in his national sample had achieved baccalaureate degrees during the nine-year period.

It is clear that addressing the low percentage of college graduates in the Chicano subpopulation necessitates examinations of Mexican American school-going behavior before, at the point of, and after college entry. The study of Chicano persistence in the elementary and secondary schools has a history of several decades, beginning, most notably, with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' Mexican American Education Study in 1971. Similarly, there has been extensive investigation of the issue of Mexican American access to college (e.g. Cardenas, 1974; Olivas,

1979). Much less attention, however, has been focused on the persistence of Chicanos at the baccalaureate level.

Of the few attempts to date to isolate factors that influence the persistence of Mexican Americans in college, the most significant is a study by H. Astin and Burciaga (1982) for the Commission on Minorities in Higher Education. H. Astin and Burciaga analyzed data based on two different longitudinal samples--one covering the first two years of undergraduate work (1975 freshmen followed up in 1977) and the other a nine-year span covering undergraduate and graduate work (1971 freshmen followed up in 1980). For the first sample, persistence was examined as continuous enrollment over the first two years of college; for the second, as attainment of the baccalaureate degree by the ninth year following matriculation. In each case, analysis was by means of a two-stage stepwise linear multiple regression "so that the students' entering characteristics were first controlled before any attempt was made to assess the influence of environmental characteristics" (Astin, 1982, p. 90).

H. Astin and Burciaga found that the persistence of Chicanos is related statistically to a number of factors including performance and preparation in high school, the education and occupational status of parents, various expectations about the college experience, the nature of financial support, and the institution of initial matriculation. As their analysis was not theory-driven, however, H. Astin and Burciaga could provide no

overarching conceptualization to tie these statistical associations together. Establishing the associations did not lead to a coherent explanation of Chicano persistence in college.

Methods of Studying Persistence in College

H. Astin and Burciaga's study is not atypical of research on the persistence/attrition of college students. Studies of this subject have either lacked the guidance of a conceptual framework altogether or have uncritically accepted frameworks developed for other socio-psychological phenomenon as the basis for conceptualizing persistence. Investigators not using conceptual frameworks have been content with establishing the correlates of persistence, rather than understanding the phenomenon as a dynamic process.

Since 1967, a number of "models" of persistence/attrition behavior have been developed and tested. These models have been based on selective findings of the correlational research, together with certain sociological and/or psychological constructs adapted from theoretical frameworks to explain other social phenomena. For example, both Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975) have proposed conceptualizations of attrition behavior heavily influenced by Durkheim's (1897/1951) sociological explanation of suicide. Other prominent models (Bean, 1983; Starr, Betz, & Menne, 1972) derive their basic theoretical orientations from one or another of the recent conceptualizations of disengagement from work (e.g. Price's (1977) model of work turnover or Dawis, Lofquist, and Weiss' (1968) theory of work

adjustment).

Undoubtedly, with the emergence of these conceptual models the study of student persistence in college has moved into a potentially more fruitful direction. As the preoccupation with the identification of correlates has been replaced by an interest in explaining the processes that lead to persistence and withdrawal behaviors, the models have held out the possibility of reaching an understanding of the underlying dynamics of persistence/attrition phenomena. Still, none of the available models has proved more than very modestly successful in explicating those dynamics. This is the result, in the author's judgment, of certain conceptual and methodological shortcomings shared by the existing models.

First, as mentioned above, each of the present persistence/attrition theorists has chosen to ground his model in a framework used to explain some other social or social psychological phenomenon. But assuming at the outset that dropping out of college is like committing suicide or leaving a job has turned out to be too severe a constraint upon the conceptualizing process (cf. Pascarella & Chapman, 1983). In addition, the models have been developed on the basis of, and tested with, data collected from institutional records and/or by means of fixed-choice questionnaires. These are methods of data collection that effectively strip away the context surrounding the student's decision to persist or not to persist in college

and exclude from consideration the student's own perceptions of the process.

Yet, given the present level of our understanding of that decision, it is precisely those characteristics--the context of the decision and the student's perspective on the context--that investigations of student persistence in college must include. What are needed then are naturalistic, descriptive studies guided by research perspectives that emphasize the insider's point of view.

In this article, I report an exploratory study undertaken to collect and analyze qualitative data describing, from the Mexican American student's point of view, the context surrounding his decision to persist or not to persist in the university; and, on the basis of that description, to develop concepts of the university-going process. The concepts so developed were used to propose hypotheses about the context within which the Mexican American student makes his decision to persist or not to persist in the university.

In lieu of one of the existing conceptual frameworks of persistence/attrition, the study was guided only by a broad research perspective--the sociology of everyday life (Douglas,1980). The latter is actually a collection of research perspectives in sociology, all of which focus on everyday social interaction in natural situations and have as their starting points (1) the experience and observation of people interacting in concrete, face-to-face situations, and (2) an analysis of the

actors' meanings.

In particular, two of the sociologies of everyday life--symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology--were used in conducting the inquiry. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes - social interaction as a process that forms human conduct: It is from the interaction of the individual with others that the meaning of things arise and it is on the basis of their meaning that the individual acts toward things. The concern of symbolic interactionist then are shared emergent meanings. Ethnomethodology seeks to understand how actors go about the task of seeing, describing, and explaining the world in which they live, that is, the process of creating shared emergent meanings and using them to account for things in one's everyday world. Two assumptions, following from the research perspective, underlay the study: (1) Persistence behavior is the consequence of a process in which the student is an active participant: He takes account of various things in his everyday world and acts on the basis of how he interprets them. (2) Persistence behavior is related to the manner in which the university becomes and remains, through everyday social interaction, a reality for the student.

Methods of Data Collection

The conceptualization of Chicano university-going reported here is based on Mexican American university students' perceptions of their own and others' college-going experiences

and attitudes, as reported to the author in open-ended interviews. Eighteen students and former students from a single entering class of a large, public southwestern university were interviewed eight to eleven months following the end of their freshman year to obtain their perceptions of their college-going behavior during, and prior to, their freshman year.

Informants for the study were selected from a list provided to the author by the Office of Academic Computing Services at the study university. The list contained the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of individuals who: (1) were new freshman at the university in the fall of 1981; (2) were registered as full-time students (more than 11 credit hours) for that semester; (3) at the time of admission reported their ethnicity to be Hispanic**; and (4) at the time of admission were citizens or permanent residents.

The list also indicated each individual's persistence status. For the purposes of this investigation, a person was considered to have persisted through his freshman year if he continued his enrollment in the university through submission of final grades in both the fall semester of 1981 and the spring semester of 1982, and through the twenty-first day of the fall

---

**Virtually all of the Hispanics who attend the university are Mexican American. For purposes of university reporting, ethnic/racial background is based on the student's response to an item on the university's admission form. Because an unknown number of Hispanics either (along with Anglos) selects the alternative "Other" or declines to respond at all to this item, it is unlikely that the list included <u>all</u> new full-time Hispanic freshmen entering in fall 1981. For the purposes of the research reported here, it was not necessary that it do so (see below).

semester of 1982. A person did not persist if he failed to register for the spring semester or the fall semester of 1982; or if he officially withdrew anytime during the fall semester of 1981 or the spring semester of 1982, or prior to the twenty-first day of the fall semester of 1982. The final sample contained 13 persisters and 5 nonpersisters.

The selection of informants from the sampling frame was guided by a single consideration: The sample had to include both persisting and nonpersisting students. In all other respects the selection process was arbitrary, producing, in essence, a sample of convenience. Individuals who agreed to be interviewed and did, in fact, participate in interviews constituted the sample. Representativeness was not an important consideration in the selection process because the purpose of the study was to discover, rather than to validate, the patterns in a process as it naturally occurs and is understood.

Open-ended or indepth interviewing, that is, interviewing without an interview schedule, was used so that the author would be free to pursue any area of inquiry suggested by the informant's responses and the informant would be free to draw upon his own experience, rather than prestated alternatives, in responding to the interviewer's questions. The author did have an interview guide to which he could refer for questions to initiate and sometimes redirect conversation, but the direction of each interview was largely guided by the responses of the

informants.

The interviews were modified "life history" interviews in that the informants were encouraged to think back over their lives and recount experiences related to their own and others' college-going behavior. For each experience, informants were asked to describe the ways in which other persons were involved in the experience, and to recall their own perceptions of it.

Open-ended interviews, particularly those requiring informants to recall past events, are sometimes considered unreliable sources of data. But, as this method of data collection "allow(s) informants to present themselves, their actions, and their reasoning over time, in ways familiar to them" (Eisenhart, 1985, p. 252), it was appropriate for the purposes of the research reported here. The view that data obtained in this way are unreliable by no means enjoys universal subscription (Trow, 1957):

> The amount of information people can tell us, quite simply and reliably, about their past experience is very great; and it is only in light of that information ... that we can frequently understand the "here and now." (p. 33)

Analysis of the data was accomplished by qualitative induction. That is, concepts and hypotheses emerged from an examination of concrete data collected in the field. The induction process was constrained only by the research

perspective: Any concept or hypothesis that emerged would, perforce, be consistent with the assumptions of the sociology of everyday life.

To initiate the analysis, the interviews were open-coded, that is, the contents were coded in as many different ways as possible. By coding is meant that whenever a segment of an interview contained an incident (contextual feature, activity, event, process, perception, strategy, social relationship, etc.) of a particular type, then the segment was assigned to a "coding category" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1980) indicating the presence of that incident type. If a segment contained incidents of more than one type, then it was assigned to as many different coding categories as there were different incident types present.

One hundred and nineteen coding categories were used in this study. These related to context and setting, informants' definitions of situations, informants' ways of thinking about people and objects, process, activities, events, strategies, and relationships. Some coding categories--those most related to the study's research perspective--were more likely to be used than others. Examples of the former are everyday social interaction and perceptions of the university. Often the coding categories were labeled with the very words (for example, "getting in" and "preparing") used by the informants themselves.

Coding was followed by a data reduction step in which the number of coding categories was reduced and the analysis became more conceptually oriented. Decisions regarding the retention,

merging, and discarding of codes initially were made on the basis of the saliency of the categories, that is, the number of cases they contained and the extent of their relationships to other categories. Further data reduction was accomplished by "clustering" (Stern, 1980) the remaining coding categories. Connections or linkages between categories were established by identifying higher order categories under which a number of coding categories fit. Conceptually, the coding categories became subcategories or properties of the higher order category. For example, the categories "scaling down" and "getting to know" were seen to be linked, since they were both processes that helped students negotiate, or penetrate, the campus geographies. Thus it was possible to "reduce" these two categories to form the broader category "getting in." "Scaling down" and "getting to know" then became subcategories of "getting in."

This process of "moving out of the data" was facilitated by the writing of research memos (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Research memos were notes of varying length that the author wrote to himself in order to capture, on the spot, insights into the data and its analysis. As the analysis proceeded, there was increasing interplay between data reduction and memo writing. Progress in reducing the data and generating conceptual categories expanded the contents of memos and suggested connections between the ideas in separate memos. The latter resulted in rememoing, that is, writing memos based on other

memos. At the same time, memoing and rememoing facilitated data reduction by suggesting how categories might be collapsed into other categories, and, thus, categories of a higher conceptual level generated.

Getting Ready

Two conceptual schemes for interpreting the college-going behavior of Chicano university students emerged from the study. One of these schemes has reference to behaviors and attitudes of these students prior to college matriculation; the other to behaviors and attitudes after matriculation. Each scheme centers around a major organizing concept. For prematriculation experiences the concept is "getting ready"; for postmatriculation experiences, "getting in."

Among experiences before college attendance reported by the informants were activities that variously engendered a college-going frame of mind; modeled college-going behavior; or simulated, in some way, the experience of going to college. These experiences were seen to constitute five categories, or patterns, of "getting ready" behavior: (1) Initial Expectation Engendering, (2) Fraternal Modeling, (3) Mentor Modeling, (4) Indirect Simulation, and (5) Direct Simulation (Table 1).

Initial Expectation Engendering refers to experiences very early in the life of an informant that led to a belief or perception, held long before actual college attendance, that the informant would be going to college. Although such an expectation could be encouraged by elementary school teachers and

Table 1

Dimensions of the "Getting Ready" Categories

Category	Type of Activity	Other Participants	Message Conveyed	Outcome
Initial Expectation Engendering	.Oral Communication	.Parents .Friends .Classmates	.You are a future college-goer.	.Expectation of being a college student.
Fraternal Modeling	.Observation .Oral Communication (a description)	.Siblings .Other relatives	.You are a future college-goer. .This is what college is like for me, your brother.	.Expectation of being a college student. .Expectation of what being a college student is like.
Mentor Modeling	.Oral Communication (a description)	.High School teachers (especially mentors)	.This is what college was like for me, your teacher.	.Expectation of what being a college student is like.
Indirect Simulation	.Oral Communication (a prescription or prediction)	.High School teachers (especially mentors)	.This is what you should do in college. .This is what college will be like for you.	.Expectation of what being a college student is like.
Direct Simulation	.Participant Observation	.Campus people	.Oh, so this is what college will be like for me, the informant.	.Expectation/ Experience of what being a college student is like.

classmates, it was most frequently perceived as the result of parental exhortation. For example, Julius (all names are pseudonyms) recalled: "That's all [my father] ever preached--college." Rose, after quoting her father's advice: "'Go to college. Go to College'," added: "You know, going to college and getting an education was just everything to my father."

Despite the obvious importance of parents and others in engendering this early college-going expectation, the informants often described the expectation as though it were a conclusion they reached independently. Some recalled coming to think about college as part of a natural progression. In the words of Anita: "So I thought: 'After high school comes college, after college comes work'." Other informants linked college-going to future benefits. For example, David recalled this sentiment: "I knew I wanted to go to college anyway because I wanted to be better off." Frances specifically connected the self-realization aspect with the influence-of-others aspect of initial expectation engendering: "Deep down [my sister] doesn't really want to go to school but it's been expected and she knows if she wants to make anything of herself and if she really wants to do something she's going to have go."

Whatever the particular characteristics of the initial expectation engendering process, the outcome was always perceived to be an expectation that the informant would be a college-goer. Experiences belonging to the remaining categories of getting ready provided substance, in the form of descriptions,

prescriptions, and predictions about college-going, for the generalized expectation of college-going that resulted from initial expectation engendering.

"Fraternal modeling" refers to the informant's having observed, and/or having received information about, the college-going behavior of a relative, usually a sibling. There appear to have been at least two aspects, or features, of this category of "getting ready." First, the informant's knowing that his relative had gone to college often led to a kind of "turn-taking" mind set. Linda provides a description of this feature: "When my brother first went to college ..., I just assumed at that point, that when I was that age, I would go to college.

The second aspect of fraternal modeling involved the informant coming to know something about the college-going behavior of the relative. Cues given by the relative provided the informant with information about how one went about being a college student, about negotiating the college campus. Oral cues were forthcoming during face-to-face interactions when the relative returned home from college, or, occasionally, over the telephone. Barbara recounted what she learned from her sister: "Well, my sister was in engineering. And she was one of the few girls which made things worse. She talked about some of her classes and stuff which I knew from then I didn't want to get into anything that I was going to have to be that involved and that so precise and everything." A few informants actually

observed, if only in limited contexts, the college-going behavior of a sibling during visits to the campus. Anita reported: "I came and visited my sister a couple of times and she lived....I remember going through all the hassles of getting her registered and everything and it was just like uh, it was a big hassle."

Knowing something about the experiences and/or attitudes of the modeler sometimes led to early apprehension about college-going. As result of experiences like the one described above and of her sister's expressed anxieties, Anita recalled being "scared" about the idea of going to college. This kind of knowledge also resulted in "negative exampling," that is, the modeler's behavior causing the informant to decide to approach college-going differently than the modeler. Barbara's remarks about how her sister's experiences with the engineering major influenced her own choice of major are quoted above. Barbara also made this observation: "I saw the mistake my sister made of thinking she was going to get A's and then she didn't and so I taught myself to be the opposite way around, to know that I wasn't going to."

Modeling behavior which provided the informants with knowledge about college-going behaviors and attitudes also was exhibited by particular high school instructors. Because the informants reported close relationships with these instructors, they are referred to here as mentors. Invariably, mentoring modeling took the form of the mentor relating his own experiences in, and attitudes about, college. Anita recalled a high school

physics teacher who talked a lot about the subject: "He went [to college] all over but [mentions a university by name] was mostly what he talked about .... He is really intelligent and anything he said, we knew it was true." Barbara provided a very specific example of her mentor's influence on her attitude development toward college-going: "One of my high school teachers, probably the best teacher I ever had, flunked out of college two times. He didn't tell his parents when he flunked out .... He was real good because all my life everybody's always expecting me to get A's .... So that was the first time I really had a different perspective."

In the case of fraternal or mentor modeling, informants came to have knowledge about college-going as the result of interactions that produced descriptions of college-going behaviors and attitudes. Such knowledge could also be the consequence of interactions that led to prescriptive or predictive statements about college-going. Experiences of the latter kind are examples of "indirect simulation."

Two subcategories of indirect simulation can be differentiated on the basis of the formality of the simulative experience. First, there were the formal, well-planned simulative experiences. These included preparation for college classes. David provided this description of a "college class" that he had taken in high school: "They told us about ACT's and college It was mainly ... to prepare us .... That's the only

class where they really pushed us to go [to college]." Career-day seminars were also simulative experiences of this kind.

Although planned simulations seem to be common to all informants, simulations that were less formal and more spontaneous apparently made a stronger impression. Anita recalled vividly a prediction her high school chemistry teacher had made about what college-going was going to be like for her and her classmates: "He would expect everybody to go to college, right? And he'd say, 'You think I'm easy now but wait until you get to the university. Those profs are just going to eat you alive if you're like this in class.' He goes, 'I'm very easy compared to some of those profs that you're going to meet.'"

While indirect simulations, like modeling experiences, involved the informants in the vicarious acquisition of knowledge about college-going behavior and attitudes, the final category of getting ready--direct simulations--includes a whole range of what might be called "quasi-college-going" experiences involving the informants' actual participation. Sorting of these experiences into subcategories of direct simulation (Table 2) was accomplished by evaluating them in the light of six criteria: (1) the intention of the informant, that is, whether his purpose was essentially or incidentally related to college-going, (2) the nature of the informant's activity, particularly the kinds of interactions he had with campus people, (3) the extent of such interactions, (4) the nature and extent of the informant's use of campus resources, (5) the duration of the experience, and (6) the

Table 2

Subcategories of "Direct Simulation"
and their Dimensions

Subcategory	Intention	Example(s) of Activities	Amount of Interaction	Duration	Use of Resources	Role of Informant
Incidental Visiting	Not related to college-going	.Taking test .Going to gym	None or limited	Short	Very limited	User
Related Visiting (I)	Related to college-going (prospectively)	.Touring campus	Limited	Short	Very limited	Tourist
Related Visiting (II)	Related to college-going (indirectly)	.Accompanying sibling	Variable but usually limited	Variable but generally limited	Limited	Visitor
Attending (I)	Variable	.Participating in summer workshop	Extensive	Relatively long	Relatively extensive	Pseudo-student
Attending (II)	Related to college-going (directly)	.Going to college class	Extensive	Long	Extensive	Quasi-student

role the informant occupied during the experience.

"Incidental visiting" refers to experiences that were essentially unrelated to college-going activity, that were typically short in duration and not recurrent, and that involved limited interaction with campus people and limited use of resources. An example is Peter's infrequent visits to the campus to use the gym. Experiences that belong to the subcategory called "related visiting" were related to college-going but indirectly, that is, to the college-going of a person other than the informant, or prospectively, that is, to the anticipated college-going of the informant. Like incidental visiting, related visiting tended to be characterized by limited interaction with campus people, limited use of campus resources, and a time frame that was short. Informants who participated in visiting experiences often reported that they came away feeling that had "just barely walked on campus" (Isabel) and had not been "exposed to the real aspect of the university being a university" (Linda).

Experiences that involved extensive use of campus resources, extensive interaction with campus people, and extended or repeated presence on the college campus belong to a subcategory of direct simulation called "attending." One kind of attending (Attending I) refers to activities that extensively imitated college-going behavior. Such activities may or may not have been related to college-going per se. Nevertheless, each experience of this type involved the informant in considerable interactions

with campus people, extensive usage of campus resources, and a relatively lengthy, or recurrent, campus stay. Emmanuel recounted his participation in a summer institute sponsored by the study university: "In the summer of my junior year , between my junior and my senior year, the university, the engineering department, sent me to a summer institute, a seminar for a week. And they try to familiarize you with the campus."

A second level of attending (Attending II) included experiences that, to some degree, constituted college-going. For example, attending college classes as an official enrollee or as the companion of an official enrollee. As an example of the latter, Natalie reported: "My mother was also going to college while I was in high school. So I used to go to classes with her. Sometimes I would just accompany her ... or if she said that she had an interesting class, I'd listen to it .... [I'd go] to classes and the cafeteria." Participation in Attending II experiences blurred the boundary between simulatior and the true experience; and it is difficult, on the basis of the available data, to estimate the extent to which such experiences only simulated post-matriculation college-going experiences vis-a-vis actually embodying them. Still, the findings to be presented in the next section indicate that having had Attending II experiences did not exempt informants, after official matriculation at the university, from obstacles to their effective negotiation of the university campus.

It should be clear to the reader that each getting ready experience resulted in either (1) an expectation that the informant would eventually go to college, or (2) an expectation of what it would be like to be college-going. Expectations resulting from experiences belonging to all categories, save direct simulation, were externally prompted, that is, the impetus for the expectation was something said or done by an individual other than the informant. Expectations from direct simulation experiences tended to derive from self-reflexive activity and, hence, were internally prompted.

Each expectation may be understood to be the outcome of an evaluative experience. That is, associated with the prompting of the expectation was a valuation--either positive or negative--of college-going. All of the experiences identified as instances of initial expectation engendering involved only positive valuations. It is hypothesized that experiences of this kind involving negative evaluations do occur, probably to individuals who decide not to attend college. Experiences assigned to the other four categories involved both positive and negative valuations. An interesting case of the latter (an example is described above) is the high school teacher's use of future college-going as a disciplinary mechanism. However, most experiences in these categories reported by the informants resulted in positive valuations of college-going.

While experiences belonging to any single category of getting ready were not temporally discrete from those belonging

to all others, there was an overall chronological pattern to the occurrence of the experiences relative to their categorical assignments. For example, initial expectation engendering, as is implied by its name, generally took place very early in an informant's life. Fraternal modeling, mentor modeling, and indirect simulation were experienced, more or less simultaneously, some variable length of time after initial expectation engendering. Direct simulation was characteristic of late precollegiate life.

One consequence of this patterning was that experiences belonging to later occurring categories tended to build upon those belonging to earlier ones. As noted above, experiences of the fraternal modeling, mentor modeling, and indirect simulation types provided substance, in the form of descriptions, prescriptions, and predictions about college-going, for the kind of generalized expectation of college-going that resulted from initial expectation engendering. The self-expectation that characterized experiences in the direct simulation category was the result of a valuation of college-going that took into account not only the immediate events but also valuations and expectations resulting from (earlier) experiences belonging to the other categories.

Getting In

Postmatriculation behaviors and attitudes can be understood in terms of a second organizing concept--getting in. In

describing their early impressions of the university, the informants were virtually unanimous in emphasizing a perception of "bigness." The descriptor big turned out to be a gloss for articulating the perceived dimensions; namely, mass, distance, and complexity; of three campus geographies: (1) the physical geography, (2) the social geography, and (3) the academic/cognitive geography.

For example, mass, distance, and complexity of the physical geography referenced the fact that for some informants the campus was larger in size than their entire hometowns (mass), that from one end of the campus to the other was much longer than the single block their high schools occupied (distance), and that it was not easy to resolve the physical campus into what would be for the informants logical and easily recognizable spaces (complexity). As an aspect of the social geography, mass was often described in terms of the literally hundreds of students with whom the informants attended class, distance the gap between student and instructor that prevented a close working relationship, and complexity the total ignorance of each other's lives exhibited by members (including the informants) of the campus population. Mass as an aspect of the academic/cognitive geography exhibited itself in what was perceived to be a seemingly unlimited numbers of potential fields of study, distance as the giant cognitive step the informants had to make in moving from "easy" high school curricula to "hard" university ones, and complexity as the perceived obtuseness of professor

talk.

Many of the post-matriculation behaviors reported by the informants may be understood as strategies to fix themselves in the physical, social, and/or academic/cognitive geographies. The behaviors employed in this way, which constitute the categories of "getting in," took account, quite naturally, of the perceived dimensions of the geographies. Each represents a potential component of the process by which the informant initiated his negotiation of the geographies. Two categories of getting in emerged from an analysis of the data: (1) "getting to know" and (2) "scaling down."

A seemingly obvious way for an individual to deal with a milieu that overwhelmed him with its size, placed him at a distance from important people and things, and posed complexity was to increase his familiarity with that milieu. The informants reported two different sets of behaviors that led to increased knowledge of the campus geographies. The first set, called mentoring, involved interactive experiences with students, already at the university for some time when the informant matriculated, who functioned as guides or interpreters of the geographies. Frances reported such a person, who had had a profound influence on Frances' early behavior at the university: "She influenced my decision to stay here [in the dorm] .... She told me basically what goes on around here and how to get along around here .... Some of the things she said, you know, about the

Engineering College and about how band was. And I wanted to be in a good band so. And engineering--she told me a lot of things that go on in engineering. She told me what classes to take my first semester because [from] the trouble she had ... she knew, you know, what you should do first .... She just kind of paved the way and guided me through making decisions, you know, as to where to go."

The second set of getting to know experiences--"peer knowledge sharing"--includes experiences with fellow newcomers in which there was a kind of cooperative exploring of the geographies. Barbara provides a good description of such activity: "It kind of helps if you have somebody to relate to and somebody who's having the same problem. And they find out something you're suppose to do that you didn't know about. So just kind of giving information back and forth." In Barbara's case, it was with high school friends, co-matriculants at the university, that she engaged in peer knowledge sharing. In other cases, peer knowledge sharing occurred with individuals who were not known to the informants prior to their arrival on campus. Anita reported her strategy of sitting by someone in each class and introducing herself to that person: "That way it makes the class a lot easier ... Because, you know, they learn it different, they can explain it in their terms and you can catch on easily and that way you're not so insecure when you go in [to class]."

Scaling down refers to behaviors and attitudes which

resulted in the informant's perception of a more narrowly defined geography, effectively reducing the amount of the geography with which the informant had to be familiar in order to locate himself. In effect, the mass, distance, and complexity dimensions of the geographies were "scaled down." Barbara, for example, explained how she had learned to avoid the "biggest places" on campus. Rather, she ran her "own little circle": "It's not like I'm at [the university]. It's kind of like I'm here in this part of it."

One focus of both the getting to know and the scaling down kinds of experiences was the process of "majoring in." In addition to its manifest function--initiating a focused study of that area of the curriculum that is most closely related to one's life and career goals, selecting an academic major had another, more latent function: It provided a vehicle for locating oneself in the physical, social, and academic geographies; it provided a way of getting in. For the informants, the assumption of an academic major meant that the physical environment was circumscribed, the curriculum was bracketed, an important element of one's self-identity vis-a-vis the campus community was created, and a cynosure for social activities was realized. Hence, the expression, "I am majoring <u>in</u> ____" [a particular academic major is named] or, more simply, "I am <u>in</u> ____" [a particular academic major is named], was not merely an idiom but an oral affirmation of the locating function of the academic

major. With respect to the role of the major in negotiating the social geography, it is interesting to note that the campus organization most frequently mentioned mentioned by the informants--an organization for Hispanic business students--had as its raison d'etre the sharing of an academic major.

Theoretical Interpretations and Hypotheses

Following Stern (1980), who argues that the process of concept development in qualitative research is facilitated by selective sampling of the literature for concepts that can be compared as data, the author looked for available social and/or socio-psychological constructs that could be used to draw out the theoretical significance of the "getting ready" and "getting in" concepts.

The construct "significant other," particularly as worked out by Haller and Woelfel (1972), is useful for considering the significance of getting ready. In their study of the occupational and educational goals of high school students, Haller and Woelfel came to define a "significant other" as:

> A person known to the focal individual, who either through direct interaction (a definer) or by example (a model) provides information which influences the focal individual's conception of himself in relation to educational or occupational roles or influences his conception of such roles (a conception of an object)" (p. 595).

In the present study, parents, high school teachers and, less

frequently, siblings were definers with respect to college-going: These individuals communicated to the informant the fact that he belonged to the category of future college-goers and defined for him what it meant to be a college-goer. In addition, high school teachers and siblings created expectations with respect to college-going by modeling college-going behavior. The mere departure of an older sibling for college might have signalled to the informant his membership in the category of (future) college-goers. Subsequently, the informant's observations of college-going behavior by siblings and teachers provided insight into the nature of the college-going role.

A second construct that was useful for drawing out the theoretical significance of getting ready was anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization refers to a premature taking on or identification with the behavior and attitudes of an aspired to group which "may serve the twin functions of aiding [an individual's] rise into [the aspired to] group and of easing his adjustment after he has become part of it" (Merton & Kitt, 1950, p. 87). The concept has been primarily worked out in relation to occupational preparation (Pavalko, 1971) and the formation of political views (Sheinkopf, 1973), but there has been some consideration of it with respect to the role of college student.

Parsons (1959), for example, has argued that because, as early as elementary school, high achievers are culled from their

classmates so they can be directed toward a college preparatory curriculum, the decision of a high achiever to attend college may be the result of a long period of anticipatory socialization. Silber and his colleagues (Silber, Hamburg, Coelho, Murphey, Rosenberg, & Pearlin, 1961) have reported that some high school students prepare themselves for college by rehearsing forms of behavior they associate with college students. This role rehearsing may include taking special courses that are viewed as trial college experiences and carrying out assignments the teacher identifies as what one does in college.

Role-rehearsing was clearly an element of the getting ready experiences recorded here. It may have been very indirect as, for example, the simulation of certain aspects of college-going in college preparatory classes. A more direct kind of rehearsing occurred when the individual participated in oncampus activities: living in dormitories, going to parties, attending classroom lectures. Another component of anticipatory socialization, the forecasting of future situations, was a feature of getting ready; as, for example, when the informant, upon observing an older sibling depart for college, predicted his own matriculation, or when a high school teacher predicted that college professors would treat the informant and his fellows much differently than he (the high school teacher) did.

In drawing out the theoretical significance of the concept getting in, the author again referred to two existing constructs. The author's consideration of "social integration"

as a theoretical datum for comparison with the concept of getting in was initially prompted by his reading of other conceptually-oriented investigations of the behavior of undergraduate students. As mentioned above, Spady (1970) and later Tinto (1975) borrowed the concept from the French sociologist Emile Durkheim as he had elaborated it in his treatise on the causes of suicide (Suicide, 1897/1951), in order to conceptualize student withdrawal from college. Durkheim argued that suicide was likely in populations where rates of interaction (collective affiliation) were too low because this leads to a lack of common sentiments and values (moral consensus) and the precedence of individual interests vis-a-vis social ones. As the individual increasingly frees himself from the social control of the group, he removes himself from its prophylatic influence and finds little meaning in life, which comes to appear as an intolerable burden.

Spady (and Tinto after him), in adapting these concepts to an explanation of student withdrawal from college, specified a lack of collective affiliation (friendship) and a lack of moral consensus (cognitive congruence) as having separate effects on dropping out behavior, that is, independently influencing the level of one's social integration. Neither Durkheim nor Spady provides a clear definition of the construct social integration.

The results of the study reported here suggest that moral consensus is neither the (principal) outcome of collective

affiliation (as postulated by Durkheim) nor an independent cause of one's persisting in life or college (as indicated by Spady and Tinto). A student's interaction with others is important for his persistence in college not simply or primarily because it leads to the sharing of general values and orientations, but because it assists the student in developing specific strategies for negotiating the physical, social, and cognitive/academic geographies. The getting-to-know category of getting in defines "collective affiliations" with specific individuals--mentors and peers--that "integrate" the student into the physical and academic/cognitive geographies as well as the social geography by providing him with knowledge of these geographies and the skills to negotiate them. According to this interpretation, then, students become integrated for distinctly more cognitive, and less moral, reasons.

In theorizing about how exactly students, with the assistance of mentors and peers, come to locate themselves in the perceived geographies, the concept of the "cognitive map" may be important. It is hypothesized (Stea, 1969) that when significant environments (e.g. a large university campus) are too large to be apprehended at once, people will form "conceptions" of them. These conceptions, or cognitive maps, are a complex of things learned about the environment, including expectations, stereotypes, and value judgments. In developing cognitive maps of large and complex spaces, individuals make certain simplifications and adjustments, in accordance with their own

needs and experience. This means, of course, that cognitive maps and mapmaking exhibit considerable interpersonal variation.

The basis of cognitive map formation is the identification of significant objects in the environment, establishment of the connectedness of the objects to one another and to the observer, and the assignment of meaning, whether emotional or practical, to the objects and their relationships. As the word "map" implies, the origin and major implication of the cognitive map lie in the spatial domain. But people are thought to organize other phenomena, for example, social interrelations, affective bonds, and temporal relationships, in the same way (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982).

The student's initial perceptions of the campus geographies may be understood to reflect the absence of cognitive maps. Thus the geographies were perceived to be large-scale environments (mass) in which objects stood separated from one another (distance) and seemed incapable of being resolved into meaningful components (complexity). The student's strategies for getting in are conceptualized to be mechanisms for facilitating the acquisition of these maps. For example, getting-to-know behaviors--knowledge sharing with other neophytes and mentoring relationships with veteran students--are shortcuts to acquiring representations of specific objects within the various geographies and the associations between these representations. Scaling-down behaviors result in more detailed maps of smaller

portions of the geographies--areas of particular concern to the individual.

On the basis of the findings and theoretical interpretations of the research reported here, the following hypotheses regarding the context of the Mexican American's decision to persist in the university are proposed.

(1) For Mexican American freshmen, the effects of so called "background" variables (e.g. high school curriculum, parents' education, parents' occupations) on persistence in college are mediated by significant-other influences. Most of the existing models of college student persistence/withdrawal posit, and are successfully used to test for, the influence of prematriculation factors on persistence. The findings of the present study suggest that where these factors influence the persistence of Mexican Americans in the university it is because they increase these students' exposure to modeling and defining experiences relative to college-going.

(2) For Mexican American freshmen, the extent and nature of anticipatory socialization for college-going has an influence not only on the decision to go to college but, once there, on the decision to stay. Haller and Woelfel (1972) have shown that the level of anticipatory socialization for college, in the form of defining and modeling experiences, has a positive impact on an individual's educational goals, that is, the decision to go to college. The results of the present study suggest that these experiences also have an impact on the decision to remain in

college. That is, a student's willingness to "stick it out" may reflect early and thorough socializing by family, teachers, and friends for college-going.

(3) For Mexican American freshmen, the extent to which social integration influences persistence is not the extent to which it promotes the individual's moral conformity to the institution but rather the extent to which it endows the individual with the capacity to cognitively manage the university environment, that is, helps him to perceive the physical, social, and academic/cognitive geographies as negotiable.

(4) For Mexican American freshmen, persisting at the university is positively related to the development and use of cognitive maps of the physical, social, and academic/cognitive geographies. The persister is more likely to employ strategies (the result of other cognitive maps?) that facilitate the development of such maps.

References

Astin, A. W. Minorities in higher education: Recent trends, current prospects, and recommendations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Astin, H. S., & Burciaga, C. P. Chicanos in higher education: Progress and attainment. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, 1981. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 226 690)

Astin, H. S., & Cross, P. H. Student financial aid and persistence in college. Los Angeles: Higher Education research Institute, 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 221 078)

Bean, J. P. The application of a model of turnover in work organizations to the student attrition process. Review of Higher Education, 1983, 6, 129-148.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1982.

Brown, G. H. The outcomes of education. In G. H. Brown, N. L. Rosen, S. T. Hill, & M. A. Olivas (Eds.), The condition of education for Hispanic Americans. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980.

Bureau of the Census. Persons of Spanish origin in the United States: March 1979. Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 354, 1980.

Cardenas, I. Equality of educational opportunity: A descriptive study on Mexican American access to higher education (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1974). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1974, 35, 2710A-2711A. (University Microfilms No. 74-25 828)

Carter, T. P., & Segura, R. D. Mexican Americans in school: A decade of change. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1979.

Crosland, F. E. Minority access to college. New York: Schocken, 1971.

Dawis, R. V., Lofquist, L. H., & Weiss, D. J. A theory of work adjustment. A revision. (Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation No. 23). Minneapolis: Center for Industrial Relations, University of Minnesota, 1968.

de los Santos, A. G., Jr., Montemayor, J., & Solis, E. Chicano students in institutions of higher education: Access, attrition, and achievement (Research Report Series, Vol. 1, No. 1). Austin: Office for Advanced Research in Hispanic Education, College of Education, University of Texas at Austin, 1980.

Douglas, J. D. Introduction to the sociologies of everyday life. In J. D. Douglas (Ed.), Introduction to the sociologies of everyday life. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1980.

Durkheim, E. [Suicide: A Study in sociology] (G. Simpson, Ed.; J. A. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951. (Originally published, 1897.)

Eisenhart, M. A. Women choose their careers: A study of natural decision making. Review of Higher Education, 1985, 8, 247-270.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine, 1967.

Haller, A. D., & Woelfel, J. Significant others and their expectations: Concepts and instruments to measure interpersonal influence on status aspirations. Rural Sociology, 1972, 37, 591-622.

Kaplan, S., & Kaplan, R. [Introduction to Chapter 3.] In S. Kaplan & R. Kaplan (Eds.), Humanscape: Environments for people. North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1978.

Kissler, G. R. Retention and transfer: University of California undergraduate enrollment study. Berkeley, Calif.: Office of the Academic Vice President, University of California, 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 215 597)

Merton, R. K., & Kitt, A. S. Contributions to the theory of reference group behavior. In R. K. Merton & P. F. Lazarsfeld (Eds.), Continuities in social research: Studies in the scope and method of "The American soldier." Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950.

Olivas, M. A. The dilemma of access: Minorities in two-year colleges. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1979.

Parsons, T. The school class as a social system: Some of its functions in American society. Harvard Educational Review, 1959, 29, 297-318.

Pascarella, E. T., & Chapman, D. W. A multi-institutional,path analytic validation of Tinto's model of college withdrawal. American Educational Research Journal, 1983, 20, 87-102.

Pavalko, R. M. Sociology of occupations and professions. Itasca, Ill.: Peacock, 1971.

Richardson, R. C., Jr., & Attinasi, L. C., Jr. Persistence of undergraduate students at Arizona State University: A research report on the class entering in fall, 1976. Tempe, Ariz.: College of Education, Arizona State University, 1982. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 223 138)

Rosenthal, W. Summer 1980 report of persistence-attrition of members of ethnic groups. East Lansing, Mich.: Office of Institutional Research, Michigan State University, 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 191 412)

Sheinkopf, K. G. Family communication patterns and anticipatory socialization. Journalism Quarterly, 1973, 50, 24-30; 133.

Silber, E., Hamburg, D. A., Coelho, G. V., Murphey, E. B., Rosenberg, M., & Pearlin, L. I. Adaptive behavior in competent adolescents: Coping with the anticipation of college. Archives of General Psychiatry, 1961, 5, 354-365.

Spady, W. G. Droputs from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. Interchange, 1970, 1, 109-121.

Starr, A., Betz, E. L., & Menne, J. Differences in college student satisfaction: Academic dropouts, nonacademic dropouts, and nondropouts. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1972, 19, 318-322.

Stea, D. The measurement of mental maps: An experimental model for studying conceptual spaces. In K. R. Cox & R. G. Golledge (eds.), Behavioral problems in geography: A symposium (Northwestern University Studies in Geography, No. 17). Evanston, Ill.: Department of Geography, Northwestern University, 1969.

Stern, P. N. Grounded theory methodology: Its uses and processes. Image, 1980, 12, 20-23.

Tinto, V. Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. Review of Educational Research, 1975, 45, 89-125.

Trow, M. Comment on 'Participant observation and interviewing: A comparison.' Human Organization, 1967, 16, 33-35.

United States Commission on Civil Rights. The unfinished education: Outcomes for minorities in the five southwestern states (Mexican American Educational Series Report 2). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971.

Withey, S. B. Summary and conclusions. In S. B. Withey (Ed.), A degree and what else: Correlates and consequences of a college education. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.